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The Auxiliary *Do* in Negative Constructions in Shakespeare's Plays

Hiroshi Yadomi

1. Introduction

In present-day English, *do* is used as an auxiliary verb in four structures: Negation, Inversion, Code, and Emphasis. The auxiliary *do* is now obligatory in negative and interrogative sentences as (1) and (2) show. However, in early English, the auxiliary *do* was not employed in these constructions as in (3) and (4).¹

- (1) She *doesn't* want to stay. (Quirk et al. 1985: 133-134)
- (2) *Did* he stay late? (Quirk et al. 1985: 133-134)
- (3) Part Fooles, put vp your Swords, you *know not* what you do. (*RJ*)
- (4) O where is Romeo, *saw you* him to day? (*RJ*)

This replacement from the old structures to today's new structures happened mostly between 1500 and 1700 (Crystal 1988: 201). The frequency of the auxiliary *do* increased evenly through the Early Modern English period (1500-1700). However, Ellegård (1953) and Nurmi (1999) both point out that the frequency of the auxiliary *do* in negative declarative sentences clearly decreased around 1600.

In this paper, I will scrutinize the use of the auxiliary *do* in negative constructions in six plays of Shakespeare and show that the

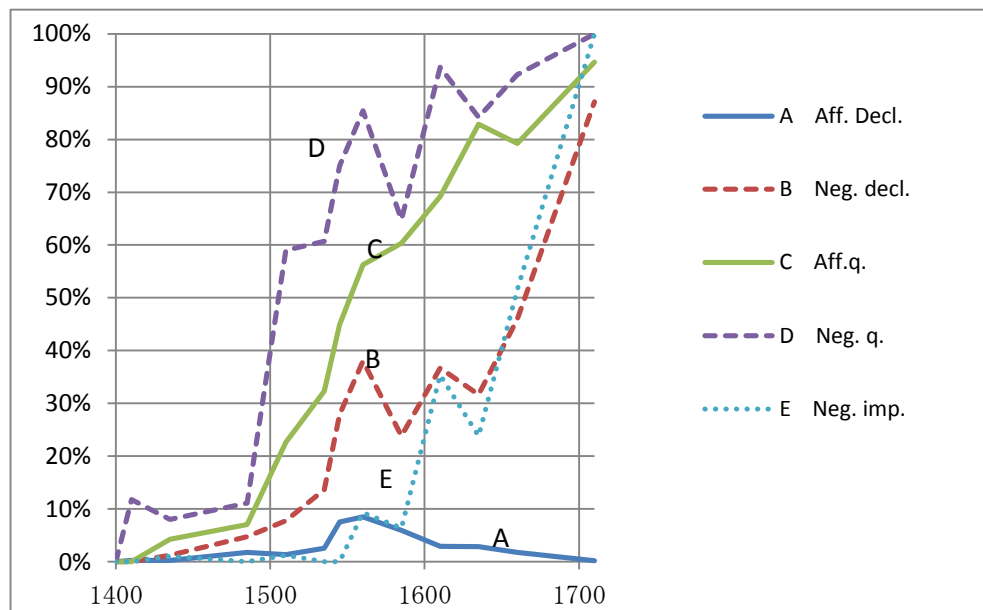
¹ In this paper, I do not give act, scene, and line to examples of dramatic works.

occurrences of *do* increased rapidly in negative sentences within a short time period. Shakespeare employs more *dos* in his later works. Thus, I am going to suggest an individual language preference changes over time. Further examination will be made on which syntactic conditions preferred the auxiliary *do*. I will examine whether the presence of an object in a clause promotes the use of the auxiliary *do* and which subject tends to take the auxiliary.

2. Previous Studies

Numerous studies have been made over the past century on the development of the auxiliary *do*. Ellegård (1953) is a classic in this field. He conducted overall research from Old English to the beginning of the eighteenth century and showed how the auxiliary *do* was used in each construction, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Per cent *do*-forms in various types of sentence
(adapted from Ellegård 1953: 162)



He points out that the auxiliary *do* developed evenly through the Early Modern period, but the frequency of *do* instantly declined in the second half of the sixteenth century (1953: 163). After this instant decline, the periphrastic *do* in affirmative declarative sentences continued to drop out and eventually became extinct, while the auxiliary *do* developed drastically in other constructions. Nurmi investigated the use of *do* in affirmative and negative sentences using *CEEC*.² She also observes the decline of *do* but identifies a different period; thus, the use of *do* distinctively dropped right after 1600. At any rate, it seems almost certain that something happened in the development of the auxiliary *do* around 1600.

Shakespeare's usage of *do* has been investigated by many scholars (Salmon 1965, Kawasaki 1987, 1988, Swierski 1994, Hope 1994, Stanford and Tsiang-Starecevic 1997). Swierski (1994), who examined two Shakespearian dramas, suggests that the frequency of the auxiliary *do* increased in a short period. However, Hope states "Shakespeare's regulation rate appears to be constant throughout his career" (1994: 22).³

The auxiliary *do* first emerged in the thirteenth century, and it finally became established in the eighteenth century. A number of factors (syntactic, phonological, and pragmatic) are proposed as a promoter of the auxiliary *do*.

The regularization of SVO word-order affected the development,

² Nurmi used "*Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEEC)*, which consists of 2.7 million words of personal correspondence written between 1417 and 1681" (1999: 141).

³ According to Hope (1994: 11), the present usage of *do* is regulated, "Constructions conforming to present-day usage are termed 'regulated', while those which would be unacceptable in Present-day Standard English are termed 'unregulated'". Therefore "regulated" means "that use of 'do' is obligatory in certain sentence types (negative declaratives, positive and negative questions) and absent from others (positive declaratives)."

as Sweet (1953: 2181) and Salmon (1965: 135) suggest. The auxiliary *do* was useful to satisfy the two general tendencies of negation which Jespersen proposes: the negative element is generally placed “in the beginning of a statement (1954: 426)” and “immediately before the particular word to be negated (1917: 5)”. Abbott (1870) and Trnka (1930) mention that the *do*-periphrasis worked as a tense carrier and the periphrastic *did* was preferred in past-tense clauses with the verb whose preterit form is identical with its present form, such as *cast*, *put*, and *set*. Rissanen points out that *do* carried the grammatical information so that it was preferred in sentences with heavy long adverbials (1999: 242).

Phonologically speaking, the second-person singular *thou* was early to accept *do*-form because the corresponding ending (-[e]st) attached to verbs is hard to pronounce especially when the verb is a polysyllabic word (Steins 1990).

Considerable attention has been recently paid to the discourse function of the periphrastic *do*. Some scholars contend that the periphrastic *do* worked as a discourse marker, emphasizing the end of a topic or the beginning of a new one (Nevalainen and Rissanen 1986, Stein 1985a, 1990). Rissanen (1985) claims the three *Es* (emotion, emphasis, euphony) are important for the use of the *do*-periphrasis. Stein (1985b) states that the periphrastic *do* is frequently used in the climax of the story, which endorses Rissanen’s three *Es*.

The factors that promoted the use of *do* are different in each construction and they should be discussed separately, but they are in fact mutually relevant between constructions. The development of *do*

as an auxiliary has a complex, multi-layered structure that cannot be solved from a one-dimensional perspective. Stein (1990) suggests different factors promoted the use of *do* at different stages of its development.

3. Texts

Six plays of Shakespeare are examined in the present study. They are from the *First Folio* (*Mr. VVilliam Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies Published according to the true originall copies* [1623]) obtained at *Early English Books Online* (EEBO). The plays consulted are *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590-1593),⁴ *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-1595), *Romeo and Juliet* (1594-1595), *Othello* (1603-1604), *Macbeth* (1606), and *The Tempest* (1610-1611). I chose Shakespeare for the following two reasons. As Ellegård and Nurmi point out, the period around 1600 is controversial and intriguing period in the history of the auxiliary *do*. Moreover, dramas are considered to be close to every day speech, in which any language changes are immediately reflected. Tieken-Boon assumes that “studying the language of a play is one of the ways to get access to the language as it was actually being spoken at the time” (1985: 132).

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. The Auxiliary *Do* in Negative Constructions in Shakespeare

I investigated negative constructions (negative declarative, imperative and interrogative sentences) in the six Shakespeare's plays mentioned above. I counted all the clauses in which *do* or *did* occur or may occur

⁴ Estimated written dates are given according to *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Stanley Wells et al. 1987).

and classified them into two forms: simple-form or *do*-form. The total relevant examples are 428 (239 in negative declaratives, 144 in negative imperatives, and 45 in negative interrogatives).⁵ Table 1 shows the occurrences of *do*/simple forms in negative constructions in the six plays.

Table 1. Occurrences of *do*/simple forms in negative constructions in the six plays

Drama	Form	Negative	Negative	Negative
		Declarative	Imperative	Interrogative
<i>TS</i>	Simple	45	29	4
	<i>Do</i>	6	0	3
<i>MND</i>	Simple	29	15	1
	<i>Do</i>	5	8	5
<i>RJ</i>	Simple	38	26	3
	<i>Do</i>	9	6	8
<i>Oth</i>	Simple	46	12	1
	<i>Do</i>	16	12	5
<i>Mac</i>	Simple	13	16	5
	<i>Do</i>	4	3	4
<i>Tem</i>	Simple	18	8	0
	<i>Do</i>	10	9	6
Total	Simple	189	106	14
	<i>Do</i>	50	38	31

⁵ I excluded *have*, *dare*, and *let* from the analysis because they occurred fairly frequently though these verbs never take *do*-form.

Figure 2. The proportions of *do*-form in negative declarative sentences and negative sentences in the six Shakespeare plays

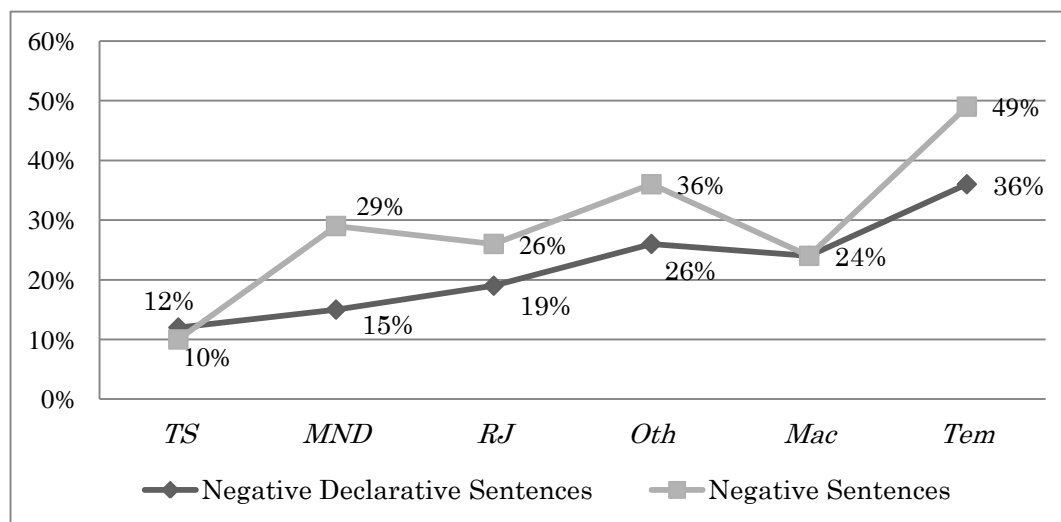
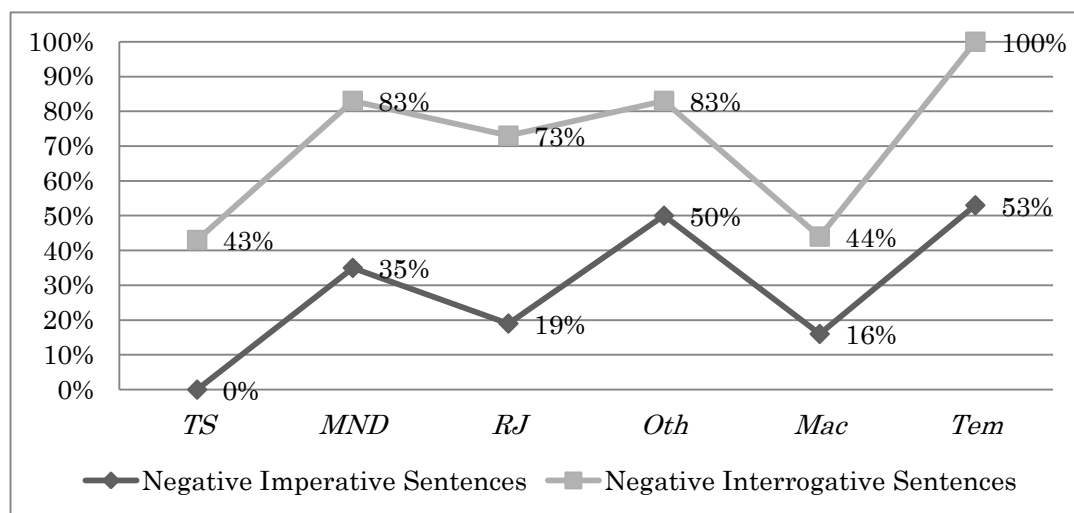


Figure 3. The proportions of *do*-form in negative imperative sentences and negative interrogative sentences in the six Shakespeare plays



The total regulation rate for negative constructions is 28% (21% in negative declarative sentences, 26% in negative imperative sentences, and 69 % in negative interrogative sentences). Figure 2

shows the rate of *do*-form in negative declarative sentences and in negative constructions (the total for the three negative constructions) according to a chronological order. The six plays are listed along the horizontal axis in order of estimated written date from left to right, and the respective proportion of *do*-form in each play is plotted along the vertical axis.

Figure 2 indicates that the rate of *do*-form gradually increased. The later the play, the higher the rate of *do*-form tends to be. It seems that the change from the old form to the new form happened rapidly within 20 years of Shakespeare's language. I divided the six plays into two categories: the early plays (before 1600) and the late plays (after 1600).⁶ The regulation rate for negative declarative sentences grows distinctly from 15% in the early plays to 28% in the late plays.

Figure 3 shows the relative frequencies of *do*-form in negative imperative and interrogative sentences. These constructions do not seem to show the gradual increase in the regulation rate. However, the regulation rate of negative imperative sentences drastically increases from 17% in the early plays to 40% in the late plays. The negative interrogative sentences show little increase from 67% to 71%, as this construction was already established in Shakespeare's language.

⁶ The early plays are *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590-1593), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-1595) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1594-1595), while the late plays are *Othello* (1603-1604), *Macbeth* (1606) and *The Tempest* (1610-1611).

4.2. Language Change of Shakespeare

Given the evidence above, I suggest an individual language preference can change as he or she grows older. Tieken-Boon (1985) investigated the use of *do* in the writings of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and made a comparison between her early and later letters. The regulation rate is higher in later writings (88.89%) compared to early writings (79.69%). She claims that Lady Mary gradually showed a preference for the periphrastic construction over time (136). This proves that the use of *do* by the same writer changes throughout his or her career, and the frequency of *do* increases in later works.

On the other hand, Hope argues that “Shakespeare’s regulation rate appears to be constant throughout his career” (1994: 22). He expects preferences of language formed in childhood to persist throughout later life in the case of a socio-linguistic variable. Hope’s main purpose is to detect an authorship of Elizabethan dramatic works. His attempt to use the regulation rate as an authorship detector may be useful for his purpose, but his method would be misleading when considering the development of *do*.

He classified all relevant examples (including affirmative and negative sentences) into “regulated” or “unregulated,” and used the regulation rate as an authorship tool. According to his data, the regulation rates in 16 Shakespeare’s plays are all between 79% and 84% but there is no tendency that the regulation rate becomes higher in later plays. This regulation rate from 79% to 84% does not overlap the regulation rate of other contemporary authors, especially that of Fletcher. Thus, Hope claims that the regulation rate can be used as an authorship tool. However, applying this dichotomy (“regulated” or

“unregulated”) to all instances and putting them together may be misleading.

It would be reasonable to examine each construction separately, because the development of the auxiliary *do* was different in each construction. The development of the periphrastic *do* in affirmative declarative sentences is especially different from other sentence types. According to Ellegård, the use of *do* in affirmative declarative sentences increased once and decreased later. On the other hand, the development of other constructions followed the same direction despite some temporary falls. Affirmative declarative sentences, which undoubtedly had the most tokens, had a significant influence on the overall regulation rate. As Figure 1 shows, the development of the auxiliary *do* was not stable and constant in all constructions. Nurmi points out the rate of *do*-forms clearly dropped right after 1600 in both affirmative and negative declarative sentences (1999: 102, 148-149). Although Nurmi’s data is based on correspondences from *CEEC*, it is likely that the development of *do* did not always advance toward “regulated.” Thus, it might be dangerous to separate sentences into two divisions, “regulated/unregulated.”

5. Further Analysis

5.1. Object

5.1.1. Negative Declarative Sentences

Negative declarative sentences have the following seven structures: “do not V”, “do not V O”, “V not”, “V not O”, “V O not”, “not V”, and “not V O.”⁷ Table 2 displays the raw frequencies of each structure.

⁷ Marginal examples, which do not have more than three tokens, are all excluded here.

Table 2. Various structures of negative declarative sentences

Negative Declarative	<i>TS</i>	<i>MND</i>	<i>RJ</i>	<i>Oth</i>	<i>Mac</i>	<i>Tem</i>	Sum
do not V	3	5	4	8	2	3	25
do not V O	3	0	5	8	2	6	24
V not	14	12	21	18	7	9	81
V not O	12	12	9	18	5	5	61
V O not	17	5	8	9	1	0	40
not V	1	0	0	0	0	3	4
not V O	1	0	0	1	0	1	3

Do-forms as in (5) and (6), have 49 instances in total. Simple-forms are divided into two types: one in which the negative adverb *not* follows the verb (7-9) and the other in which it precedes the verb (10, 11). The former has 187 tokens, while the latter only seven.

- (5) Oh let me see thee walk: thou dost not halt.
[do not V] (TS)
- (6) I did not see you: welcome gentle Signior, ...
[do not V O] (Oth)
- (7) For that it stands not in such Warrelike brace, but ...
[V not] (Oth)
- (8) Nothing my Lord; or of —I know not what.
[V not O] (Oth)
- (9) We loose it not so long as we can smile: ...
[V O not] (Oth)
- (10) (As late I haue beene) I not know: thy Pulse
[not V] (Tem)

- (11) As stooping to releue him: I not doubt He came aliue to Land.
 [not V O] (Tem)

I will examine whether the presence of an object in a clause affects the rate of *do*-forms. The marginal two variables, “not V” and “not V O” are excluded because they behave differently from other structures. In negative declarative sentences, the overall regulation rate is 21%. The regulation rate of clauses without objects (“do not V” [25] vs. “V not” [81]) is 24%.⁸ In these clauses, the regulation rate grows slightly from 20% in the early plays to 28% in the late plays. However, the regulation rate in clauses with objects goes up drastically from 11% to 30%.

This rapid change can be ascribed to the sudden decrease of the “V O not” structures. While the number of “V not O” structures does not change much, the “V O not” structures clearly decrease from 30 in the early plays to 10 in the late plays. This is natural considering the common nature of negative constructions in which negative adverbials tend to appear earlier in the sentence and closer to the verb in order to clarify what is negated (Jespersen 1917: 5, 1954: 426). In later period, the “V O not” structures were not considered preferable because, in these structures, the negative particle *not* is placed later in the sentence and remote from the verb.

5.1.2. Negative Interrogative Sentences

Negative interrogative sentences can be classified into the following 10 patterns: “do not S V”, “do not S V O”, “do S not V”, “do S not VO”, “do not V”, “do not V O”, “V S not”, “V S not O”, “V not S”,

⁸ The number of tokens is shown in square brackets.

and “V not S O”. Table 4 provides the raw frequencies for these structures.

Table 4. Various structures of negative interrogative sentences

Negative Interrogatives	<i>TS</i>	<i>MND</i>	<i>RJ</i>	<i>Oth</i>	<i>Mac</i>	<i>Tem</i>	Sum
do not S V	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
do not S V O	0	2	1	1	0	0	4
do S not V	0	2	2	0	1	0	5
do S not V O	3	1	4	1	2	4	15
do not V	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
do not V O	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
V S not	0	1	1	0	4	0	6
V S not O	4	0	1	0	0	0	5
V not S	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
V not S O	0	0	0	0	1	0	1

In negative interrogative sentences with the auxiliary *do*, a negative particle *not* could appear either before the subject (12, 13) or after the subject (14, 15).

- (12) Doth not Rosemarie and Romeo begin both with a letter?
[do not S V] (RJ)
- (13) Do not you hear a cry?
[do not S V O] (Oth)
- (14) Do you not iest?
[do S not V] (MND)

- (15) Didst thou not leade him through the glimmering night ...?
[do S not V O] (MND)

Examples of “do not V (O)” as in (16) are questions in which subjects are omitted. I obtained four instances of these and they all take *do*-form. In this example, the auxiliary *do* is needed probably because the whole length of the sentence can be so short without the auxiliary that the sentence can be awkward to pronounce.

- (16) Didst not marke that?
[do not V O] (Oth)

In simple-forms, constructions in which a negative participle *not* follows a verb are avoided.

- (17) Came they not by you?
[V S not] (Mac)
- (18) Mark'd you not how hir sister Began to scold,
[V S not O] (TS)
- (19) Dismay'd not this our Captaines, Macbeth and Banquoh?
[V not S O] (Mac)

In sentences without objects (17), the rates of *do*-form [9 tokens] and simple-form [7 tokens] are not very different. However, among clauses with objects (18), *do*-form [18 tokens] appears three times more frequently than simple-form [6 tokens]. There is a clear pattern in which auxiliary *do* tends to appear in sentences with objects. This

is because of the tendency to avoid two adjacent noun phrases (subject and object). The structure “V not S O” appears only once in the six plays consulted (19). In both negative declarative sentences and negative interrogative sentences, the use of the auxiliary *do* increases in clauses with objects. Apparently, these constructions with objects led the development of *do* in this period.

5.2. Subject

The second-singular pronoun *thou* is considered to prefer the auxiliary *do* (Stein: 1990). I examined whether this claim is maintained in my data. I identified subjects from all the instances. The raw frequencies of *do*/simple-forms with various subjects are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Subjects of negative declarative sentences (*do*-form/simple-form)

Pronoun	<i>TS</i>	<i>MND</i>	<i>RJ</i>	<i>Oth</i>	<i>Mac</i>	<i>Tem</i>	Sum
<i>I</i>	3/17	2/9	2/16	11/25	0/6	5/8	23/81
<i>we</i>	0/1	1/1	0/1	1/1	1/1	0/1	3/6
<i>thou</i>	1/4	1/0	1/6	0/2	0/0	1/2	4/14
<i>you</i>	2/6	0/3	2/2	1/2	2/1	0/2	7/16
<i>he</i>	0/2	0/3	0/6	1/3	0/2	1/1	2/17
<i>she</i>	0/5	0/2	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/1	0/8
<i>it</i>	0/1	0/1	0/2	0/4	0/0	0/0	0/8
<i>they</i>	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/1	0/0	0/0	1/1
<i>non</i>	0/3	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/3
NP	0/6	1/10	4/5	1/8	1/3	3/3	10/35

I divided all tokens into four groups: “*I*-group” (*I* and *we*), “*you*-

group” (*thou* and *you*), “*he*-group” (*he*, *she*, *it* and *they*), and others (NP and non subject). For negative declarative sentences, there is a preference for the “*I*-group” (26/87)⁹ and “*you*-group” (11/30) to occur with *do* but there are very few instances of *do* that occur with “*he*-group” (3/34). The “*he*-group” tokens appear with the auxiliary *do* only three times within six plays, although there are 34 occurrences in simple-form. The relative frequency of *do*-form among the “*he*-group” is only 8%, while “*I*-group” is 23% and “*you*-group” is 27%, respectively.

The phonological factor does not seem to be a significant promoter of *do* because the “*you*-group” is only slightly higher than the “*I*-group” in terms of the frequency of *do*-form. The emotional factor, which is one of Rissanen’s three *Es*, is probably a promoter of the development of *do*. Rissanen (1985) proposes that three *Es* are important factors that promoted the use of *do* in affirmative statements. These factors seem to promote the use of *do* even in negative constructions. The longer the sentence becomes, the kinder, more polite, and sometimes more sarcastic the expression tends to be, that is, the more emotional. In present-day English, “I do not think so” sounds kind, polite, and sometimes sarcastic depending on the situation and speaker/hearer relationship while “I don’t think so” sounds blunt. The example (20) is apparently more polite than (21) when considering (20) is the utterance of Iago trying to calm down his angry senior officer, Othello, and (21) is the word of Cassio answering his peer’s question after furious Othello fired him.

⁹ (*do*-form/ simple-form)

(20) I do not know: Friends all, but now, euen now, euen now. (*Oth*)

(21) What had he done to you?

I know not. (*Oth*)

The auxiliary *do* is deeply connected with emotion in negative declarative sentences as well. Among the personal pronouns, the “*I*-group” and “*you*-group” tend to be attached to emotion because *I/we* and *thou/you* are present in the conversation while *he/she* and *they* are not present. This creates some emotional distance between speaker/hearer and the third person. Thus, *do* is seldom employed when mentioning the third person.

The same tendency is attested in the negative interrogatives. The “*he*-group” (6/4) has a lower regulation rate compared to the “*you*-group” (18/7). The frequency of *do* is the highest when the subject is *thou* (8/2) as in (22).

(22) Didst thou not leade him through the glimmering night... (*MND*)

The sentence would sound awkward without *do*, for example, “Leadest thou not him” because the structure is phonetically unfavorable and the verb is too far from the object. The “*I*-group” only appears two times, both of which take *do*-form as in (23).

(23) Do I entice you? Do I speake you faire?

Or rather *doe* I not in plainest truth,

Tell you I doe not, nor I cannot loue you? (*MND*)

This sentence also sounds awkward without *do*, for example, “tell I not ...?” The adverbials placed between *not* and the verb *tell* might be a factor that determines the use of *do* here. As mentioned above, *do* is preferred in sentences with heavy and long adverbials. *Do* works as a tense carrier here and “doe I not” contains the grammatical information so that the main verb *tell* can carry the semantic information. There are several *dos* in (23). These three lines are the remarks of Lysander to Helena. Lysander does not love Helena but she follows him in the night forest. He worries about her and tries to persuade her to go home in a kind manner with many *dos*. Emotion is an important factor in negative interrogative sentences as well.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have dealt with the use of the auxiliary *do* in negative constructions in Shakespeare’s plays. The use of *do* changes over the time even within the same author. The regulation rate of negative declaratives, which have the most tokens, shows the most preference for change from 10% in the earliest play to 49% in the last play among the six plays consulted. From this evidence, I contended that an individual language preference can change. Other negative constructions also exhibit the same preference for change. Syntactic conditions such as objects and subjects seem to be significant factors that promoted the use of *do*. Among negative declaratives, the regulation rate of clauses with and without objects is not different. However, clauses with objects became rapidly regulated within 20 years from 11% (in earlier plays) to 30 (in later plays). Subjects seem

to play a significant role in promoting the use of *do*. The “*I*-group” and “*you*-group” prefer *do*-forms, while the “*he*-group” tends to appear with simple-forms in both negative declarative and interrogative sentences.

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